IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as indicated below.

1. (Currently Amended) A computer-based method for processing a transaction, comprising:

determining a purchase price for said transaction, said purchase price including a fractional cost that exceeds a whole-unit amount;

obtaining a buyer-provided offset value from an item associated with said buyer;

generating a random number based on said buyer-provided offset value; and

rounding said purchase price up or down to a whole-unit amount based on said random number, wherein said rounding is performed by said computer.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said step of generating a random number is performed by a third party to said transaction.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said step of generating a random number is supervised by a third party to said transaction.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said step of generating a random number further comprises the step of obtaining a seller-generated increment value.

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein a buyer commitment to the transaction is obtained by means of currency submitted to a vending machine.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein a buyer commitment to the transaction is obtained by means of currency submitted to a trusted third party prior to the generation of said random number.

8. (Original) The method of claim 5, wherein said buyer-provided offset value is specified by the buyer in response to a query.

9. (Original) The method of claim 5, wherein said buyer-provided offset value is generated from a serial number obtained from paper currency provided by the buyer.

10. (Original) The method of claim 5, wherein said buyer-provided offset value is generated from a numeric identifier obtained from a product associated with said transaction.

11. (Original) The method of claim 5, wherein the seller generated random number is made without access to said buyer-provided offset value.

12. (Currently Amended) A computer-based method for processing a transaction, comprising:

determining a purchase price, N.C, for said transaction, said purchase price including a fractional cost equal to C/100, that exceeds a whole-unit amount, N;

obtaining a buyer-provided offset value from an item associated with said buyer;

generating a random number based on said buyer-provided offset value; and

rounding said purchase price up to a price of N+1 units with a probability of p and down to a price of N units with a probability of (1-p), wherein probability p equals C/100 and wherein said rounding is based on said generated random number and is performed by said computer.

13. (Original) The method of claim 12, wherein said step of generating a random number is performed in a manner that prevents a bias towards a buyer or seller.

14. (Original) The method of claim 12, further comprising the step of obtaining a buyer commitment to the transaction.

15. (Currently Amended) A computer-based method for processing a transaction, comprising:

determining a purchase price, N.C, for said transaction, said purchase price including a fractional cost equal to C/100, that exceeds a whole-unit amount, N;

receiving an amount of X units from a buyer, where X is greater than N;

obtaining a buyer-provided offset value from an item associated with said buyer;

generating a random number based on said buyer-provided offset value; and

rounding said purchase price up to a price of X units with a probability of ((N + p) / X) and down to a price of zero units with a probability of 1 - ((N + p) / X), wherein probability p equals C/100, and wherein said rounding is based on said generated random number and is performed by said computer.

16. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein said step of generating a random number is performed in a manner that prevents a bias towards a buyer or seller.

17. (Original) The method of claim 15, further comprising the step of obtaining a buyer commitment to the transaction.

18. (Currently Amended) A system for processing a transaction, comprising:

a memory that stores computer-readable code; and

a processor operatively coupled to said memory, said processor configured to implement said computer-readable code, said computer-readable code configured to:

determine a purchase price for said transaction, said purchase price including a fractional cost that exceeds a whole-unit amount;

obtain a buyer-provided offset value from an item associated with said buyer;

generate a random number based on said buyer-provided offset value; and

round said purchase price up or down to a whole-unit amount based on said random number.

19. (Original) The system of claim 18, wherein said random number is generated in a manner that prevents a bias towards a buyer or seller.

20. (Original) The system of claim 18, wherein said processor is further configured to obtain a buyer commitment to the transaction.

21. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 18, wherein said purchase price, N.C, for said transaction includes a fractional cost equal to C/100, that exceeds a whole-unit amount, N, and said purchase price is rounded up to a price of N+1 units with a probability of p and rounded down to a price of N units with a probability of (1-p), wherein probability p equals C/100.

22. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 18, wherein said purchase price, N.C, for said transaction includes a fractional cost equal to C/100, that exceeds a whole-unit amount, N and wherein an amount of X units is received from a buyer, where X is greater than N, and wherein said purchase price is rounded up to a price of X units with a probability of ((N + p) / X) and rounded down to a price of zero units with a probability of 1 - ((N + p) / X), wherein probability p equals C/100.

23. (Original) An article of manufacture for processing a transaction, comprising:

a computer readable medium having computer readable code means embodied thereon, said computer readable program code means comprising:

a step to determine a purchase price for said transaction, said purchase price including a fractional cost that exceeds a whole-unit amount;

a step to obtain a buyer-provided offset value from an item associated with said buyer;

a step to generate a random number based on said buyer-provided offset value; and

a step to round said purchase price up or down to a whole-unit amount based on said random number.